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CINEMA ARTS FESTIVAL HOUSTON ANNOUNCES STELLAR LINEUP OF FILMS AND GUEST ARTISTS

Houston Cinema Arts Society produces nearly forty programs including feature films, documentaries, live music, outdoor projections, video installations & celebrity guest appearances

HOUSTON, TX (October 14, 2009) – Houston Cinema Arts Festival organizers announced today a stellar lineup of actors, directors, and other artists participating in the jam-packed event scheduled from November 11-15, 2009. Guests presenting new and classic films include actors Tommy Lee Jones and Tilda Swinton, Texas filmmaker and director Richard Linklater and Mexican screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga. The arts-oriented festival will also host photographer Susan Meiselas, rock band Dengue Fever, and members of The Yes Men and Ant Farm media collective, among many other notable presenters.

The only U.S. festival devoted to films by and about artists of all stripes, the 2009 Cinema Arts Festival Houston runs November 11-15 at various cultural locales throughout Houston's Downtown and Museum District areas. It is more than just a film festival; it is a vibrant multimedia arts event breaking out of the confines of the movie theater through live music and film performances, outdoor projections, interactive video installations and more.

The Festival program involves collaboration among many of Houston's extraordinary film and arts institutions, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Menil Collection; the Houston Ballet; FotoFest; Aurora Picture Show; and many others. Many of their representatives serve on the board and task force of the Houston Cinema Arts Society, the nonprofit organization responsible for devising the Festival's unique identity.

"How appropriate for a city with so many first-class arts institutions to host a festival devoted to films by and about visual, performing and literary artists," said Houston Mayor Bill White. "I am especially pleased to see that director Tommy Lee Jones and screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga will be here to explore the elements that combined to produce a masterwork from our own state, *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*. Emerging filmmakers will, I expect, be inspired and future Texas-filmed classics may grow out of this inspiration."

In November 2008, Houston Cinema Arts Society presented a preview festival with just five programs honoring artists Lynn Hershman Leeson and Alex Rivera. This year's Festival has expanded to include nearly forty programs including special series, performances, installations and discussion panels that focus on various multi-faceted topics surrounding cinema and the arts.

SPECIAL SERIES AND GUESTS

Three special series, or "mini-festivals," bring celebrity guests and incomparable work to the Festival: "The Worlds of Tilda Swinton;" "Guillermo Arriaga, Escritor" and "The Films of Richard P. Rogers and Susan Meiselas."

"The Worlds of Tilda Swinton" celebrates the Academy Award winner's many artistic achievements in producing, writing and acting, as well as her passionate commitment to the cinematic arts. It includes a sneak preview of her

latest independent feature film, to be presented on Saturday, November 14 at 6:45pm in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Brown Auditorium Theater. On Sunday, November 15, Swinton will discuss her close collaborations with two avant-garde artists, Derek Jarman and Lynn Hershman Leeson. She will present the documentary on Jarman she wrote and narrated, Derek at 1pm, followed by a showing of the cult feminist sci-fi film, Teknolust, where she will be joined by director Hershman. The weekend culminates on Sunday, November 15 at 6 pm with "The Ballerina Cinema of Dreams," a celebration at **Discovery Green Park** co-presented by HCAS and Swinton's 8½ Foundation, featuring a free outdoor screening of The Red Shoes and preceded by a performance of three short pieces by Houston Ballet II. Swinton will be on hand at each of the screenings to introduce the films and, in many cases, engage in conversation with the audience.

"Guillermo Arriaga, Escritor" is devoted to the work of Arriaga, the extraordinary artist who wrote the trilogy of films directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu (Amores Perros, 21 Grams and Babel). On Thursday, November 12 at 9:45 pm, Arriaga will introduce Amores Perros, the film that first brought him worldwide acclaim, at the Angelika Film Center. The next day, on Friday, November 13 at 3 pm at the Alabama Theatre. Nuestra Palabra will host a reading by Arriaga from his novels as well as a discussion about his approaches to writing across media. That night at 6:45 pm at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Arriaga will be joined by actor and director Tommy Lee Jones for a screening and discussion of Arriaga's screenplay. The Three Burials of Melauiades Estrada, a classic story of friendship. revenge and redemption, grounded in the contemporary environment of the Texas-Mexico border. The Three Burials will also be the subject of the Festival's "Setting the Scene" workshop on November 14, featuring crew members exploring the production of a Texas-filmed classic (see "Meet the Makers" below).

"The Films of Richard P. Rogers and Susan Meiselas" includes several screenings and events exploring the fruitful partnership of filmmaker Richard P. Rogers and photographer Susan Meiselas, including the Houston premiere of one of the year's most original and important documentaries, The Windmill Movie, at the Angelika Film Center at 6:45 pm on Saturday, November 14. Directed by Alexander Olch and produced by Pulitzer Prize—winning photographer Susan Meiselas, The Windmill Movie is imaginatively composed from footage collected over many years for an unfinished autobiography by legendary art documentarian, experimental filmmaker and film professor Richard P. Rogers.

Meiselas, who was Rogers's life partner for many years (they married near the end of Rogers' life), collaborated with him on two classic documentary films made in the 1980s in support of the Nicaraguan people and revolution, Living at Risk and Pictures from a Revolution. Meiselas will be present for a discussion of Pictures from a Revolution after it shows Friday, November 13 at 4 pm at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's Brown Auditorium. Living At Risk will play Saturday, November 14 at 4 pm at the Rice Media Center. Alfred Guzzetti, who co-directed Pictures from a Revolution and Living at Risk with Rogers and Meiselas, will also attend these screenings.

Finally, thanks to Meiselas's efforts, some of Rogers's key works have been gathered for "Remembering Dick Rogers," which played to great acclaim at the Walter Reade Theater in New York this past June. The program consists of three short films: Elephants: Fragments of an Argument, Moving Pictures: The Art of Jan Lenica; and 226-1690. The series of three films, with each film being less than thirty minutes, which will be shown **Sunday**. November 15 at 1 pm at the Rice Media Center.

OPENING NIGHT FESTIVITIES

The Festival's Opening Night will kick off on Wednesday, November 11 with two highly anticipated films and a very special guest.

Richard Linklater, who was born in Houston and is the maker of such seminal films as Slacker, Dazed and Confused, A Scanner Darkly, School of Rock and Before Sunset, will be at the screening of his latest theatrical release, **Me and** Orson Welles at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston at 8 pm. Meanwhile, the acclaimed Precious: Based on the Novel "Push" by Sapphire will be playing downtown at the Angelika Film Center, beginning at 7 pm.

Me and Orson Welles is Linklater's tribute to the ultimate maverick director, Welles, as filtered through Robert Kaplow's novel of the same name. Zac Efron graduates from teen heartthrob to serious actor and displays impressive range as Richard Samuels, a young actor drawn into Welles's theater troupe and orbit. There he is enraptured by

Welles's Girl Friday, Sonja (Claire Danes). Sonja, however, is enthralled with the great director, played by Christian McKay, whose impersonation and interpretation of Welles is nothing short of uncanny. *Me and Orson Welles* will be shown and Linklater will speak at the **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston** in the Brown Auditorium Theater on **Wednesday, November 11 at 8 pm**.

Precious: Based on the Novel "Push" by Sapphire, passionately directed by Lee Daniels, written with elegant economy by Geoffrey Fletcher and brilliantly performed by a fearless ensemble cast, is the story of Claireece "Precious" Jones (Gabourey Sidibe), a sixteen-year-old African-American girl born into a life no one would want. Since its world premiere at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, where it won three awards (including the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award), Precious has been moving people of all backgrounds with its dramatic, vividly realized story of a Harlem teenager who discovers her own worth, beauty and potential. Precious will be shown at the Angelika Film Center in Downtown Houston on Wednesday, November 11 at 7 pm.

MULTIMEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL: INSTALLATIONS

Cinema Arts Festival Houston's commitment to multiple and intersecting genres of art is realized with several multimedia events, including media and art installations.

One such attraction is **H BOX**, the portable screening room designed by Portuguese artist/architect Dider Fiuza Faustino and sponsored by the Hermès Foundation. H BOX, which will be stationed at the historic Alabama Theatre through the close of the Festival on November 15, features a rotating, diverse program of videos by ten internationally renowned artists including Alice Anderson (United Kingdom), Yael Bartana (Israel), Matthew Buckingham (USA), Sebastián Diaz-Morales (Argentina), Cliff Evans (USA), Kota Ezawa (Germany), Cao Fei (China), Dora García (Spain), Shahryar Nashat (Switzerland) and Su-Mei Tse (Luxembourg). Curator **Benjamin Weil**, who commissioned the works for H BOX, will visit Houston and speak in the "Meet the Makers" series (see below) on November 15.

H BOX is on exhibit at the historic Alabama Theatre from October 21 through the close of the Festival on November 15. It is open Wednesday through Friday 1 – 6 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 11 am – 6 pm. Admission is free.

Another multimedia attraction is the special preview of *What if, Why not? Underground Adventures with Ant Farm*, a documentary by Texas filmmakers Laura Harrison and Beth Federici all about the 1970s renegade architectural and media collective **Ant Farm**. *What if, Why not?* is the first film to delve into the work of Ant Farm, best known for its iconic land-art piece Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, TX. Radical architects, video pioneers and mordantly funny cultural commentators, the Ant Farmers created a body of deeply subversive work that questioned everything by posing a set of creative and comedic alternatives.

The Ant Farmers promoted inflatable structures as affordable, anti-consumerist options for shelter. Such Ant Farminspired inflatable structures and video projections, created by University of Houston students, will supplement the screening on Thursday, November 12 at 7 pm at the University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture. Guest filmmakers Laura Harrison and Beth Federici and legendary artists and Ant Farm original members Chip Lord and Curtis Schreier will be in attendance at the screening, which is co-sponsored with the Aurora Picture Show, University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, and will join in a guestion and answer discussion following the film.

MULTIMEDIA ARTS FESTIVAL: LIVE MUSIC AND FILM PERFORMANCES

The Festival will expand its multimedia focus by integrating the art forms of film and live music in unique and surprising ways, as in its presentations of *Peter Pan, When It Was Blue* and *The Lost World.*

Peter Pan, the 1924 silent film, will be screened at the **Miller Outdoor Theatre** on **Friday, November 13 at 7 pm** and accompanied by live music performed by legendary silent film accompanists **Donald Sosin and Joannna Seaton and Paul Reisler**, founder of **Kid Pan Alley**. Prior to the movie, audiences will enjoy a recital by students **from MacGregor Elementary School**, who will be working with Kid Pan Alley the week preceding the Festival composing original songs related to *Peter Pan*. This program is free of charge.

When It Was Blue, a critical sensation at last year's Toronto Film Festival, is a double-projector performance by avant-garde artist and New York based filmmaker Jennifer Reeves with live musical accompaniment by Icelandic multi-instrumentalist and composer Skúli Sverrisson at Rice Media Center on Friday, November 13 at 7 pm. When It Was Blue, which features ecological footage Reeves shot around the world that was then hand-painted, seeks to convey the artist's efforts to preserve the beauty of natural environments and 16mm film, both endangered. The hand-painted film creates impressionistic textures and colors that mimic the qualities of land, water and trees and fuse with the photographic imagery. Reeves will also present her feature narrative film, The Time We Killed, on Saturday, November 14 at 1 pm in the Rice Media Center.

The Lost World, the 1925 groundbreaking classic adventure flick, will feature live musical accompaniment by Cambodian-American psychedelic rock band **Dengue Fever** at **Warehouse Live** on **Saturday**, **November 14 at 8 pm**. Based on sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel of the same name, *The Lost World* features amazing stop-motion sequences by animation pioneer Willis O'Brien, who later animated *King Kong*, and outlandish costumes and sets. Dengue Fever's live score, which premiered at the San Francisco Film Festival last spring, playfully and lovingly evokes worlds both known and unknown and elevates *The Lost World*'s offbeat humor and singular beauty.

MORE SPECIAL GUESTS

Andy Bichlbaum of the Yes Men will present *The Yes Men Fix the World* (Saturday, November 14 at 7 pm at Rice Media Center and Sunday, November 15 at 1 pm at the Angelika Film Center). Winner of the Panorama Audience Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, the film is a screwball true story about the satirical activist team, The Yes Men. Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno's theatrical performances take place on unusual stages. Dressed in thrift-store suits, posing as top executives of corporations, The Yes Men lie their way into business conferences and parody their corporate targets in outrageous, yet strangely plausible ways.

Holly Fisher will present *Everywhere at Once* (Thursday, November 12 at 6:45 pm, at Angelika Film Center), which she co-directed with fashion photographer Peter Lindbergh. It is the story of a woman recovering her ability to dream and to feel is embedded in a complex, shifting weave of text (by poet Kimiko Hahn), photographic images (by Peter Lindbergh) and music (by Lois V. Vierk). Throughout, the viewer is guided by the magnetic voice of Jeanne Moreau.

Fisher will also display her *Fundy Blues* series of prints, derived from images from her film *Bullets for Breakfast*, at the Festival Headquarters in the Alabama Theatre, November 11-15.

Filmmaker **Morgan Riles**, who works with installations, video, photography and new media, will accompany her film **Biomodd (Ath1):** A Living Game Computer as Social Sculpture. Bringing together ecology, game culture and installation art, Biomodd [ATH1] is an online multiplayer game and ecosystem created during Belgian artist Angelo Vermeulen's residency at the Aesthetic Technologies Lab in Athens, Ohio. Riles, who directed this impressive production as her Ohio University thesis film, says, "it is basically about art through the eyes of my generation, the way we see art."

Bernice Rose, currently the chief curator of The Menil Collection's Drawing Institute and Study Center, was director of the Pace Wildenstein Gallery in New York when she joined with its owner, Arne Glimcher, to develop an ambitious gallery show on the influence of early cinema on painters Braque and Picasso. Out of the exhibition came this film, directed by Glimcher, *Picasso and Braque Go to the Movies*, which Rose will introduce and discuss. It screens **Saturday, November 14 at 1 pm** at the **Angelika Film Center**.

"MEET THE MAKERS" EDUCATIONAL PANELS & WORKSHOPS

"Meet the Makers" is a series of in-depth discussions with featured artists and professionals offering exciting opportunities to peek behind the scenes of filmmaking at its most creative. All programs, most FREE (except for "Setting the Scene") will be held at Festival headquarters, the Alabama Theatre.

The "Meet the Makers" series is sponsored by the Southwest Alternative Media Project (SWAMP), a 32 year old Houston based nonprofit media arts organization promoting the creation and appreciation of film, video and new media by providing independent makers with opportunities for professional development education and a variety of other resources.

Experimental Film and the Visual Arts

Friday November 13 from 1-2 pm

The moving image as imagined by two acclaimed artist-filmmakers, Jennifer Reeves and Holly Fisher, will be explored in relation to painting, sculpture and photography. This session will be moderated by Andrea Grover, an independent curator, artist and writer who founded the Aurora Picture Show in 1998.

Writing for the Page and Screen: A Conversation with Guillermo Arriaga Presented by Nuestra Palabra

Friday, November 13 from 3-4 pm

Guillermo Arriaga, acclaimed Mexican author, screenwriter, director and producer, will read from his novels and engage in a conversation about the similarities and differences in writing novels and screenplays. The session will be moderated by Margarita de la Vega-Hurtado, film scholar and critic, and Tony Diaz, the founder and director of *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say*.

Setting the Scene: The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada

Saturday, November 14 from 1-4 pm

Tickets \$20 or \$15 for students, seniors and members of SWAMP and Women in Film and Television, Houston chapter

This workshop, presented in conjunction with Women in Film and Television, Houston and the Houston Film Commission, features the crew of the Guillermo Arriaga / Tommy Lee Jones film *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*. The creative team for the film will focus on how a finished film is the product of the artistry of many creative individuals, not just the director. Panelists include Rick Ferguson, Executive Director of the Houston Film Commission, and film crew members: Production Designer **Merideth Boswell**; Costume Designer **Kathleen Kiatta**; Art Director **Jeff Knipp**; and Line Producer **Eric A. Williams**. This workshop will be moderated by Trish Rigdon, who is a producer, director and designer in theatre and film at the University of Houston School of Theater and Dance.

H BOX: A Conversation with Benjamin Weil

Sunday, November 15 from 1-2 pm

Benjamin Weil, the artistic director of H BOX, an innovative mobile screening hall presenting short films by ten international artists, talks about commissioning video artists and the evolution of this exciting collaboration of art and commerce. This session will be moderated by Toby Kamps and Mary Magsamen. Kamps is the Senior Curator at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and Magsamen is Curator for the Aurora Picture Show and a video artist who often collaborates with her husband Stephen Hillerbrand.

The State of the Arts on Video

Sunday, November 15 from 3-4 pm

This workshop will be an in-depth panel discussion about the distribution possibilities for films by and about visual and performing artists. Panelists include Fredericka Hunter, Patrick Kwiatkowski, Marian Luntz and Kelly Sanders. Hunter is the owner of Texas Gallery and the co-founder of ARTPIX, which distributes and preserves the work of important contemporary artists in digital formats. Kwiatkowski is the co-founder of Microcinema International, a leading distributor of films and videos by and about artists. Luntz is film and video curator for the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and Sanders is Executive Director of Truly Indie. The panel will be moderated by Mary Lampe, Executive Director of SWAMP and Co-Executive Producer of *The Territory*, the Texas PBS short film showcase.

OTHER FILMS ABOUT THE ARTS

Festival Curator Richard Herskowitz combed several sources and festivals, including Toronto and Silverdocs, to find the right mix of films to show at Cinema Arts Festival Houston that adhere to the Festival's emphasis on works by and about artists. "What I've brought back are some of the finest films exploring the visual, performing and literary arts made in the past year," Herskowitz said.

La Danse: Le Ballet De L'Opera De Paris Thursday, November 12 at 6:45 pm

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston - Brown Auditorium Theater

Fredrick Wiseman's new documentary shows in vivid visual detail how The Paris Opera Ballet, one of the world's great ballet companies, develops seven ballets, including *Paquita*, *The Nutcracker* and *Romeo and Juliet*. His investigations reveal the coordinated and collaborative work of choreographers, ballet masters, dancers, musicians and costume, set and lighting designers.

Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench Friday, November 13 at 6:45 pm Sunday, November 15 at 9:45 pm Angelika Film Center

A full-fledged musical that recasts the MGM tradition in a gritty, near-documentary style (*L Magazine* called it "the first Mumblecore Musical.") Jason Palmer plays a young Boston jazz musician who drifts from affair to affair, his trumpet the only constant in his life—until he makes a promising connection with an aimless introvert named Madeline.

Who's Afraid of Kathy Acker? Saturday, November 14 at 4 pm Angelika Film Center

A multi-layered work featuring animation, archival footage and interviews with the likes of William Burroughs, Carolee Schneemann and Richard Hell, this is a thoughtful and creative film biography/essay on the late outlaw writer and punk icon, whose formally inventive novels, published from the '70s through the mid-'90s, challenged assumptions about gender roles, sexuality and the literary canon.

Sacred Places and Nora Saturday, November 14 at 9:45 pm Angelika Film Center

This program features two different visions of African culture and creativity, both exploring cinema, music and dance as narrative forms and expressions of oral cultures. *Nora* is a poem choreographed and interpreted by Nora Chipaumire on her return to Zimbabwe, the native land of her childhood *Sacred Places* brings into view things that are personal, sacred and close to the heart of director Jean-Marie Teno: identity in times of globalization; the state of African cinema; and the complicated relationship among art, popular culture and business.

Theater of War Sunday, November 15 at 4 pm Angelika Film Center

Theater of War pulls from material as diverse as backstage footage of Meryl Streep rehearsing for her unforgettable performance as Mother Courage to modernist playwright Bertolt Brecht's famed (and famously clever) testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee. John Walter's film is about theater and war, capitalism and Marxism, the postwar anti-Communist hysteria of the 1950s and one literary genius's ability to make art from them all.

Passages From James Joyce's Finnegans Wake and Pastorale: A Tribute to Mary Ellen Bute Sunday, November 15 at 4 pm Rice Media Center

As the Festival celebrates the ties between film and the other arts, Mary Ellen Bute, the pioneer experimental filmmaker born in Houston in 1906, could not be overlooked. Bute's work, and the two examples of it included in this program, crosses over film, painting, music and literature. One of her finest films, *Pastorale* creates continuous shapes, flows, vapors and illuminations of colored light to evoke the multiple voices of J.S. Bach's *Sheep May Safely Graze*. Bute's interest in abstraction was rooted in a broader interest in the modernist aesthetic, including its manifestations in the literary works of James Joyce. She devoted seven years to filming her interpretation of his last work, *Finnegans Wake*.

FESTIVAL HEADQUARTERS, FILM / EVENT VENUES

While screenings and events take place at multiple venues such as Miller Outdoor Theatre, Angelika Film Center, Discovery Green, Warehouse Live, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Rice Media Center, the official **Festival headquarters are located at the historic Alabama Theatre**. There, visitors will be able to visit the Main Box Office, attend panels and workshops in the "Meet the Makers" series and visit the H BOX screening room.

Instantly one of Houston's premier movie theaters when it opened in 1939, the Alabama Theatre closed in 1983 and in 1989 became home to The Bookstop, a bookstore eventually acquired by Barnes & Noble, though its famous art-deco exterior and classic interior were carefully preserved. When the Bookstop vacated the space in September 2009, the Houston Cinema Arts Society jumped at the chance to making the site the headquarters for the 2009 Festival, reconnecting the Alabama Theatre both to its cinematic roots and to its continually evolving story in Houston.

ADMISSION

Although several Festival programs and components are free, including H BOX at the Alabama Theatre, Kid Pan Alley at Miller Outdoor Theatre, *The Red Shoes* at Discovery Green and many of the educational panels and sessions, buying Festival Passes, Badges and/or tickets is the most cost-effective way to explore all that the Festival has to offer.

Several different types of ticketing options are available:

- \$50 Festival Wristbands grant access to all regular Festival screenings
- \$250 Festival Badges provide access for all screenings, educational panels and performances
- \$500 Patron Passes / All Access Badges provide access for the screenings, education panels, performances, and opening/closing receptions
- Individual tickets for regular public screenings and educational panels are available at \$6 for Matinees and \$10 for evenings; premium screenings are \$15
- A student/senior price of \$6 is available for all regular public screenings (excluding opening night)
- Special event tickets range from \$15 \$25

Tickets are now on sale on the Festival Web site, www.cinemartsociety.org. Tickets and Festival merchandise also can be purchased at the Festival's official headquarters, located at the historic Alabama Theatre, 2922 South Shepherd, Houston, TX 77098, beginning October 21.

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About Houston Cinema Arts Society and Cinema Arts Festival Houston

Houston Cinema Arts Society (HCAS) is a non-profit organization created in 2008 under the direction of a dedicated task force with the support of Houston Mayor Bill White and the leadership of Franci Crane to organize and host **Cinema Arts Festival Houston**, a ground-breaking and innovative film and multimedia arts festival featuring art by and about artists and celebrating the vitality and diversity of the arts in Houston and enriching the city's film and arts community. HCAS is funded in part by grants from the Crane Foundation, City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance and the City of Houston Convention and Entertainment Facilities Department. **Cinema Arts Festival Houston** debuts in Houston November 11 – 15, 2009. Festival headquarters are located at the historic Alabama Theatre, 2922 South Shepherd, Houston, TX 77098. Online tickets sales began October 14 at www.cinemartsociety.org. In person tickets sales begin at Festival headquarters on October 21.